



THIS IMAGE: High Cape, Wells-next-the-Sea
BELOW: Beach huts at Wells

Walk on the WILD SIDE

JO VAUGHAN FINDS AN EASY WALK IN A FAVOURITE PATCH THAT LEAVES PLENTY OF TIME FOR ICE CREAM OR A PADDLE

Wells-next-the-Sea typifies everything I love about Norfolk. The town centre is a good mile or so from the open water, but an estuary brings vessels into its small

harbour just yards from the remaining malting. This was one of many that once acted as storehouses for the unloading boats, although most have been demolished. Family-run amusement arcades are found nearby (although these aren't to the detriment of the townscape, and it wouldn't be a British seaside resort without them anyway). If you don't fancy a gamble there are plenty of cafés and small shops to spend your money in.

Rather than the town itself, our walk centres on its beach. This is separated from the harbour via a long bank, beside which a miniature train runs during the summer months. At the end is the large car park from where we will start our

GENERAL INFORMATION

NEAREST CLUB SITE: Fakenham Racecourse Caravan Club Site, Pudding Norton, Fakenham NR21 7NY. Tel 01328 862388. Open all year
DISTANCE: 4 miles/6.4km
TERRAIN: Sandy beach and woodland paths
NUMBER OF STILES: None
ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT: Explorer 251 (1:25,000).
LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY: Easy
CAR PARKING: The Beach Car Park Pay and Display charges £3 for any period until the end of October, then £1 from 1 November to 14 March
DIRECTIONS: Take the B1105 and follow the signs to Wells-next-the-Sea. Follow the signs to 'The Beach' and park at the end
REFRESHMENTS: Café at the car park
TOILETS: At car park

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

- **Holkham Hall and Bygones Museum, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk NR23 1AB.** Tel 01328 710227 or see holkham.co.uk. The Bygones Museum has full disabled access, but the Hall cannot carry electric wheelchairs up to the first floor
- **Pensthorpe Nature Reserve and Gardens, Pensthorpe, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 0LN.** Tel 01328 851465 or see pensthorpe.com. Route around the lakes and gardens suitable for wheelchair users and frequent exhibitions and events
- **Sheringham Park, Upper Sheringham, Norfolk NR26 8TB.** Tel 01263 823778 or see nationaltrust.org.uk. Open all year from dawn until dusk. Full access for disabled. Cost: Free (car park charge for non-members)
- **The Hoste Arms, The Green, Burnham Market, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE31 8HD.** Tel 01328 730103



ABOVE, LEFT AND RIGHT: West Sands, Wells-next-the-Sea



stroll, and here you'll also find a pitch-and-putt course and a café selling ice creams and hot food. Nearby there's a lifeboat station which is not only crucial to sea safety but is often open to visitors due to its collection of items which illustrate its history. A full-sized maritime museum is housed in the original lifeboat house next to the harbour, although this will be closed for refurbishment for most of this year.

From the car park you can walk for miles along the sandy beaches and tall

dunes, as well as through the peaceful woodland, past small ponds and along dykes. We initially join a long distance footpath that continues along the Norfolk coastline, allowing you to walk much farther if you wish, before returning to Wells by bus at the end of the day. By the way, many of the paths through the woods are suitable for pushchairs and such like, although they do get muddy after wet weather.

Our only problem is that you won't find a Club site in Wells, the closest being

just 10 miles away at Fakenham Racecourse. Although we're thinking about the summer season at the moment, this year-round site is particularly appealing during winter as Fakenham's town centre is but a short walk away. Also, if you and your hiking boots decide to go farther afield out of season, the wind may be bracing but the air is clear, the paths (and roads) are quiet, and the renowned Hoste Arms at nearby Burnham Market is always ready and waiting to serve you a warming meal (booking is essential).

TOURIST INFORMATION

Staithe Street, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk NR23 1AN. Tel 01328 710885 or see north-norfolk.gov.uk

DIRECTIONS

1 From the car park, go through the gate at the far west corner marked 'Emergency Gate, Keep Clear' (also signed as Cycle Route number 1).

2 Continue past the small lake on your left until the path branches. Veer left, still following the Cycle Route No 1 sign as well as an acorn and a yellow arrow. You'll pass a 'Holkham National Nature Reserve' sign at the junction's confluence, on your right.

3 The path continues through some rushes. Keep following the main track until the woodland opens into a rough, scrubby clearing. Here the path forks – keep to the left again, continuing almost straight ahead.

4 When you get to a tarmac road that leads to another car park, almost go back on yourself by turning sharp right, still following the acorn signs, along a wooden boardwalk and past a 'Fire, Danger' sign. Follow this boardwalk as it curves to the right of an emergency telephone and continue to the beach.

5 Just before the beach is a great viewpoint with a bench that's perfect for a picnic. Continue down between

two rails until you descend on to the sand. Then either turn right to follow the inner line of the beach, or go ahead towards the sea before turning right along the line of the dunes.

6 When you see a line of beach huts to your right, walk towards them

while following their line. Where they finish, continue ahead past a red life-buoy and up a wooden-railed boardwalk. Then turn right up the concreted slipway.

7 The car park that was our starting point is to your right.

BELOW LEFT: Wells-next-the-Sea

